

## **JubilARTS -25 years of arts and cultural development in the Corangamite region**

When the first Committee of Corangamite Arts was formed on January 1982 it established an organization that would flourish and provide many opportunities and much enjoyment for the people of the Corangamite District. Its ability to grow, adapt and change has ensured that Corangamite Arts remains relevant, viable and vibrant. Of course, there have been peaks and troughs with periods of frantic activity and periods of calm introspection and reflection, even despondency. Without doubt there would be few, if any, local volunteer arts group in the state which for 25 years have continuously delivered such a diverse and successful range of arts projects, programs and experiences for the local community.

The Corangamite Branch of the Victorian arts Council, as it was then known, grew out of Music '81 a Victorian Government program which encouraged local music events. Once Music '81 concluded the group who organized it and other supporters decided to harness their energy and expertise and form a local branch of the Victorian Arts Council. The formation of the group was driven by Hampden Shire Councilor, the late David Richards, the late Jean Wood, Diana Allen, Lyle and Elspeth Buntine, Denise Schofield, Hilary Newman, and John Menzies.

The Inaugural meeting of the Corangamite Branch of the Victorian Arts Council was held in the Terang Library on 12th January 1982

when Elspeth Buntine was elected President and Billie Rowley secretary. The first function held on April 16th that year was Grand Variety Music Night at the Terang Civic Centre and for the first few years the focus was mainly music.

In 1986 the group was incorporated and became the Corangamite Arts Council Inc and from that time it has moved towards initiating arts and cultural activities in the community and facilitating the creation and expression of local arts. As well as bringing performances to the district it has organized a wide array of workshops, community cultural development projects and assumed an arts/culture advocacy role.

After local government amalgamation in 1994 the word Council was dropped from the name to avoid confusion with the newly formed Corangamite Shire Council.

Programs and activities have been largely determined by the members and their interests and skills. This has involved mainly committee but also scores of members and we can trace the achievements of the organization according to the members who were active at that time. In retrospect we have provided for a broad church although it was not always planned.

## **Music**

From the beginning the group arranged recitals, regular jazz performance both as concerts and dances. "Jazz at the Civic" in Terang was a sure guarantee that there would be packed house:

Ross Lewis' Band, New Harlem Storyville Allstars, Keith Sadler, Tom Baker and many other bands were well patronised. Jazz @ Glenormiston was also extremely popular. Classical music lovers were treated to George Dreyfus, Roman Rudnytsky, Cambridge Buskers, Polyphony as well as more intimate performances such as soprano Christine Ferraro in the Rose Room and St Cecilia Singers at Keayang Homestead. Often these same musicians ran workshops for students and master classes for more accomplished local musicians. Recitals by local musicians such as Geraldine Conheady, Michele MacKinnon and Judith McKenzie. were also staged. More than once, in partnership with local government, we brought the free afternoon concert, Music for the People to both Terang and Camperdown. Over the years inaugural member John Menzies has organised numerous music events at 'Wuurong' and in September 2006 the highly successful 'John Manifold Pleasant Sunday Afternoon' of music and poetry performed John Spooner and Miranda Manifold.

More recently, with the Lions Club of Lismore we initiated the Co-opera performance of Die Fledermaus as well as making a cash contribution to the performance budget.

## **Writing**

Since the early 1990s we have been constantly amazed and delighted with the popularity of writing workshops and projects that we have provided for the community. Regular writing activities lead by published authors such as Doris Leadbetter, Kevin Brophy; Arnold Zable, Graeme Kinross Smith, Beverly Roberts. Kristine

Henry, Aileen Kelly as well as local writers Gail Watson, Glenda Hirth and Vivienne Stanley. The arts allow people to tell the stories and writing is the prime medium. Writing about Place workshops with Graeme Kinross Smith inspired us to organize a community writing project and publish the works of local writers as *Tales of Corangamite* in 2001. Readings at the Mill and poetry in pubs were popular with local writers. We continue to support the Corangamite writers group which meets monthly and regular readings by local writers. For the last 6 years we have been sponsoring the Open Age Writing Section at the Noorat Show.

**Exhibitions** The absence of an art gallery has not deterred us from staging exhibitions and displays. in marquees, halls, schools and at agricultural shows. Peter McMahon exhibited his sculptures in the forecourt at the Killara Centre in Camperdown and the From Crater to Coast photographs by Grahame Arkinstall and Jill Fraser were hung in the McCabe Room in May 2000. The ‘I Have a Volcano in my Backyard’ competition attracted almost 400 postcard size entries all of which were displayed at the Camperdown College Environment Centre. Eight of these postcards were selected and printed as commercial postcards, the Corangamite Volcanic Landscapes Series 2005. The most recent and most ambitious ‘Lake Gnotuk and Volcanic Landscape’ exhibition in October 2006 brought to the district the LakeGnotuk: a Layered History traveling exhibition together with 25 works by local artists.

Local artist Enid Cummings staged a retrospective of her work at the 1996 Alan Marshall Festival in Noorat and Annie Kiel Taggart at

the 2001 Centenary Festival.

### **Visual Arts**

Numerous workshops in drawing and painting have been organized with the most recent focusing on connection between art, science and landscape conducted by Brigid Cole Adams and Marion Manifold.

### **Festivals**

In 1996 we held the first Alan Marshall festival at Noorat with a wide program including *The I can Jump Puddles* book walk tour, street theatre, folk music, children's story telling, tall tales and a book fair of Alan Marshall's publications which illustrated to local people the breadth of his writing. A special feature of the festival was the Arts and Disability Forum and a showcase of visual and performance art by people with disabilities.

A similar program for 2001 festival celebrating the centenary of the birth of Alan Marshall was organized in partnership with Corangamite Shire.

### **Children and Youth**

From the very beginning we provided 'Arts for Kids' which assisted schools in providing essential visual art, craft, drama, dance and music. We organized activities included kite making, clown performance and painting and drawing session run by former president Janet Ferguson. The first large scale partnership with schools was in 1986 when we erected the Children's Peace Tent at

the Noorat Show. Over 20 schools in the region contributed hundreds of pieces of visual art based on the theme of 'Peace Starts with Me'. In 1988 writing from students in Terang and Noorat was published as *In the Shadow of the Mount: a Bicentennial Children's Anthology* which was launched by children's author Paul Jennings. On 14 July 1996 in the Terang Civic Centre we held the Corangamite Youth Arts Encouragement Awards presentation to 44 post primary students. The awards were to recognize and encourage abilities, interests and pursuits in school arts programs. Throughout 1987-88 Neil Jackson screened monthly films for children in Terang. Over the years we have provided \$1000 to the Jean Wood Music Scholarship Fund and donated musical instruments to the Terang Toy Library. From 1999-2003 we supported the Terang Resources managed Artspace, the Corangamite Youth Enterprise Project by providing a donation and mentors to young artists.

## **Theatre**

The 1990s were the golden days for Corangamite Arts and professional theatre. Through a partnership with first the Camperdown Town Council and the Hampden Shire Council and then with Corangamite Shire the venues alternated between Camperdown Theatre Royal and the Civic in Terang. We booked the shows, applied for Guarantee against Loss, publicized and promoted, sold tickets, bumped in bumped out as well as often providing meals for the performers and supper for the audience. The shows included Reg Livermore in *Wish You Were Here*, Shirley Valentine with Amanda Muggleton, Beverley Dunn celebrating

Mary Gilmore in To Botany Bay on a Bondi Tram, Macka's Music Hall, Late Nite Catechism, the uproarously funny The Royal Commission into the Australian Economy with John Clark and Ross Stevenson , Cho Cho San the timeless story of Madame Butterfly, Pathfinder the story of John Shaw Neilson, ,Kids Stuff with Julie Forsyth, the perennial On Our Selection, Nice People, Mime and Clown Nola Rae and the record breaking Melbourne Comedy Festival Roadshow.

### **Artists in the Community**

These projects have involved working with a community in making decisions about art and their physical and social environment. The Lismore Creative Village project was our first foray in this area. Designer Grant Fink provided the professional expertise to the community who through a series of workshops and community meetings arrived at a visionary plan for their town. This project forged a partnership between Corangamite Arts, Hampden Shire and the Victorian Arts Council.

The Terang Gateway Project brought sculptor Neil Roberts to the town for 6 weeks in 1994. He established a studio in a vacant shop in High Street and ran a number of community meetings allowing people to express their views on how they wanted to welcome travelers and visitors to their town. History, industry and the environment all played a part in arriving at the final design which was then constructed by dry stone waller David Long with assistance from the community.

Sculptor and land artist Simon Taylor was artist in Residence at

Glenormiston College where he worked with students and staff as well as community. As well as the skills workshops he ran, his legacy is the dry stone sculpture 'Volcanic Metamorphosis' in the garden at Glenormiston.

Geelong based poet Bev Roberts was Writer in Residence in Terang for 8 weeks in 1995. Terang: Past, Present and Future brought together an inter-generational group of writers who were passionate about their place and wanted to record this in prose and poetry.

In 1997 textile artist Gabriella Verstraeten spent 6 weeks in Camperdown working with the Quilters' Group designing and machine quilting a work to celebrate the centenary of the clocktower. The quilt is now permanently on display at the Camperdown Campus of the South West Health Service.

### **Community Cultural Development**

Without doubt the most ambitious project was the design and installation of the Alan Marshall Precinct at Noorat. The success of the two festivals and particularly the book walk tour convinced us that a permanent precinct of the places which provided the backdrop to *I Can Jump Puddles* should be interpreted and signed. Our funding application was also convincing as a Pride of Place grant of \$58,000 from the Department of Infrastructure Victoria allowed us to engage an urban designer to work with the steering committee and the community in deciding what design components would be installed and how the town would be interpreted. This was a very demanding project not only because of its multidisciplinary nature but especially since one of its key enthusiasts and able worker on the

steering committee and Catherine Berger moved to Western Australia during this time. The precinct incorporating 18 sites interpreting the history, industries and social life of the town during the first half of the 20th century was launched by best selling author Paul Jennings.

The Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project began as a modest project with a modest grant of \$5000 from the National Estates Grant in 1991. Members and others joined the Project Team which conducted field work, identified, measured, photographed, sketched and recorded the significant walls in the district. We ran a number of information sessions and workshops in the craft of dry stone walling. The report prepared for the acquittal of the project grant we then published in 1995 and much to our surprise and delight has sold almost 3000 copies not only within the region but throughout the country and to Britain and the United States. *If These Walls Could Talk* is the first publication of its kind in the country and is found in the collection of many public and institutional libraries. This project, more than any other, attracted people who would not normally be involved with an arts organization or an arts project.

The Dry Stone Walls Heritage Trail installed in 1997 with funds from Arts Victoria. interpreted and signed ten of the significant dry stone walls identified in the Conservation Study at Pomborneit, Derrinallum and Kolora. The work that we pioneered in attracting visitors to the hinterland and explaining the natural and cultural landscape was enhanced by the Corangamite (1996) and the Cross Regional Volcanoes Discovery Trail Committees (1998). Our

expertise has been sought and given to a number of organizations, projects and conference programs including Stone Upon a Stone Travelling Exhibition, Dry Stone Walls Association of Australia, The Kanawinka Geopark Bid, Greening Australia, the National Trust, Heritage Victoria and Conservation Volunteers Australia.

### **Awards**

Cultural Association of the Southern Coast and Western Plains (CASCAWP) Inaugural Award in 1994 for The Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project

Regional Arts Victoria Award in 1995 to Andrew Miller and Josie Black for the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project  
Corangamite Shire Australia Day 1997 Event of the Year for the Alan Marshall Festival 1996

Corangamite Powercor Business Achievement Awards, Finalist  
Community Project Award 1999 for the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Heritage Trail

Corangamite Shire Powercor Business Achievement Award,  
Finalist Community Service Award 2000

National Trust of Victoria, Historic Towns of Victoria,  
Commendation for best Interpretation for Visitors for the Alan Marshall Precinct and Discovery Trail 2006.

### **Advocacy**

In 1986, the year of incorporation Bernadette Milstead, Sue Hancock and Josie Black wrote a submission in response to the

paper 'Locally Community Arts Development' which argued strenuously for decentralization of arts funding. In 1999 Corangamite Arts was the prime mover in the formation of an Arts and Cultural Strategy for Corangamite Shire which was realized in 2000. A public forum attended by over 30 people held in September 1996 gave strong support for lobbying and informing Council on the benefits of such a Strategy. Subsequently Andrew Miller and Josie Black together with Robert McMurray from Regional Arts Victoria made a presentation to Council and with the support of Di Daffy, a councilor at the time, we were successful. We assisted Council officers to prepare the brief and, after Council, were the prime reference point for the consultant Bob Ramsay in developing the Strategy. We have maintained a position on the Reference Group overseeing the Implementation of the Corangamite Arts and Cultural Strategy.

We actively supported lobbying and representations by Glenormiston College for the return of the Robert Prentzel carvings to the Glenormiston Homestead. The reinstallation of the stair case was celebrated on 3 December 1995 with a lunch and talk by Terence Lane curator of Australian Art at the National Gallery Victoria. More recently we have lobbied local government regarding a Regional Arts Development Officer for Corangamite.

### **Millennium Resolutions**

A memorable evening of farewelling memories and releasing dreams which linked Terang with 13 other towns in the state on 31 December 1999. In partnership with the Terang Golf Club and

before a crowd of 800 people at the Terang Golf Course (a volcanic crater), dreams written on white paper attached to balloons were released and memories of the past written on red paper were burnt in a stone cairn representing a volcano. Sculptor Peter McMahon built the stone cairn, community artist Francis van der Mark ran workshops for children to make lanterns which were carried in procession and writer performer Rosanne Linton conducted workshop for adults and secondary students who wrote their memories and dreams in verse, prose and song.

### **Reconciliation**

On Harmony Day, 18 March 2002 we launched the community consultation phase of the Community Reconciliation project based on Victoria Square and Albert Crescent. The event was a celebratory performance by Indigenous artists of the region. The community consultation conducted by Kirrae Wuurong woman Vicki Couzens received strong support for the proposed reconciliation park. Corangamite Shire accepted the report and recommendations and allocated funds to the project which will need additional funding from other sources. We continue to work with Council on this project.

The Torch – Re-igniting Community South West project (2003) was community building through the performing arts. We facilitated Indigenous writers, dancers, musicians to visit Camperdown College and Terang College and include local students in creating and presenting a top theatre production in Camperdown and Terang. Every year since 1994 Corangamite Arts has joined the

Corangamite Reconciliation Group in organizing an ecumenical musical get together on Reconciliation Sunday the last Sunday in May.

### **The Present**

In the last two years we have reviewed our Statement of Purpose, held a Project Planning Workshop which provides us with a Project Plan to be reviewed annually. Our membership and participation is the healthiest it has been for a long time. We have formed the Writers' Group, we have had monthly Saturday afternoon activities after the meeting. These have included workshops and demonstration in papermaking, body art, poetry reading, textile art vintage fashions, music afternoons at the Elephant Bridge Hotel better known as the Darlington Pub and much more. All of these augers well for the future of Corangamite Arts, the community and the volunteers who make it all possible.

### **The Future**

The immediate challenge is the same as it was in 1982 and 1992. How do we actively involve the community and our own members in designing and delivering our own arts programs, projects and activities? And how do we this in a way that acknowledges the complex and diverse needs and interests of the community and the individuals who comprise Corangamite Arts? A dynamic Corangamite Arts committee and members will meet the challenge and will continue to provide a forum and a focus for local creativity and broad participation in arts.

Josie Black OAM

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